



Cooking with Fresh Vegetables: Focus on Sweet Potatoes



Fresh vegetables are an important source of vitamins and minerals for children. Sweet potatoes are rich in vitamins A, C, and E, beta-carotene, folic acid, and potassium. They are also a good source of complex

carbohydrates and fiber. This issue we

will focus on various ways to serve sweet potatoes to children.

Sweet potatoes are versatile:

- Bake and serve as a side dish.
- Dice and add to soups and stews.
- Cut and bake french-fry style.
- Mash boiled sweet potatoes and use in breads or muffins.

Sweet potatoes can also be substituted in some recipes that call for white potatoes.

- Sweet potatoes can be used in soups and stews that call for white potatoes.
- Sweet potatoes can be served mashed. To add variety to regular mashed potatoes, use half white potatoes and half sweet potatoes.

Prepare to cook sweet potatoes:

1. Store unwashed sweet potatoes in the refrigerator separately from fruits if possible.
2. Wash sweet potatoes with water using a vegetable brush.

3. Sweet potatoes can be cooked with the skin on to take advantage of important vitamins that are stored right under the skin.

Methods of preparing sweet potatoes:

1. Boiling

Bring water to a boil in a pot; add fresh peeled sweet potatoes cut in chunks. The water should partially cover the sweet potatoes. For 1 pound of sweet potatoes, boil for 30-35 minutes.

2. Baking

Place unpeeled sweet potatoes on a cookie sheet. Bake long enough for sweet potatoes to be easily cut with a fork. Baking time will vary depending on the size of the sweet potato. Sweet potatoes can be wrapped in foil to steam them, but foil is not necessary.

Seasonings:

You can use cinnamon, nutmeg, brown sugar, and/or orange juice to season sweet potatoes. Refer to *Mealtime Memo* No. 7, 2007, for tips in seasoning vegetables. Young children do not need added salt. Sweet potatoes taste great. There is no need to add any fat for flavor.



Mealtime Memo FOR CHILD CARE



Nutrition Education Activity: In this activity, children will learn how sweet potatoes grow and why they are a healthful food choice.

Activity Instructions:

1. The teacher or older children can stick tooth picks around the middle of a raw sweet potato.
2. The teacher should fill paper or styrofoam cups with water (one cup per child).
3. The teacher or older children can suspend the sweet potato in a cup of water using the toothpicks. The bottom half of the sweet potato should be in the water.
4. The teacher should place the cup holding the potato near a window to get light.
5. The teacher and/or older children should add water as needed to keep the cup full of water. Children can watch the potatoes sprout.

Teaching Points:

Use the following teaching points to talk to children about sweet potatoes as they watch their plants sprout.

- Talk about how sweet potatoes grow. Tell them that sweet potatoes grow in the ground like the roots of a tree. Tell them that the sprouts on sweet potatoes can be planted in the ground and will produce more sweet potatoes.
- Tell children that sweet potatoes are harvested August through October.
- Tell children that sweet potatoes are a native American plant.
- Tell children that sweet potatoes are rich in vitamins and minerals. Tell them that the vitamins in sweet potatoes do many important things for their bodies, such as helping them to see and helping prevent infection.

Lunch Menus

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Beef Vegetable Soup H-11A ¹ Grilled cheese sandwich Diced pears Milk	Sliced turkey breast Steamed broccoli Whole grain roll Sweet Potatoes and Apples I-08 ¹ Milk	Peanut butter ² and jelly sandwich Low fat mozzarella string cheese Carrot-raisin salad ³ Fresh apple slices Milk	Fish Nuggets D-09A ¹ Green beans Baked sweet potatoes Whole grain bread Milk	Chili Con Carne D-25 ¹ Diced apricots Cornbread Milk

¹USDA Recipes for Child Care. Available online at www.nfsmi.org. Sweet potatoes can be substituted for white potatoes in Beef Vegetable Soup H-11A to increase nutrients.

²Sunflower butter can be substituted for peanut butter.

³Raisins can be a choking hazard for young children.

Sources:

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